

Bonsoir, Good evening, Sego,

I want to first acknowledge that we are gathering on the traditional territory of the Mohawk peoples.

I want to begin by thanking all of the elected officials who have brought greetings this evening. You are all important and cherished neighbours and allies. The continued success of the City of Cornwall depends on strong relationships with our MP and MPP and also on our ability and willingness to work together effectively and respectfully as a region. This is NOT always easy...but our communities have handled bigger challenges, so I have confidence that we will get this right.

Je remercie nos partenaires et nos voisins, pour leur présence ici ce soir, et je vous assure qu'une de mes priorités est de bien travailler avec vous, de façon respectueuse et engagée.

You may have noticed the rather intense media attention following this election. It was a bit overwhelming as during the campaign, the matter of my gender and of my heritage and of my language was not a significant subject of discussion. But it pleases me to think that my election may provide some encouragement to a diversity of people to engage in public life.

However, when you are the first of something, it can bring some attention, and I am eager to use this attention to speak positively of our community and of our region. And so what I enjoyed most about all of these interviews, was the opportunity to talk about Cornwall. I would talk about how decades ago Cornwall elected the first Jewish Mayor in Canada, Mayor Horovitz, about the diversification of our local economy. The media seemed surprised by some of this information. I have to admit that it was fun to challenge their perceptions of Cornwall and focus on the many successes of our community.

J'ai beaucoup aimé ces entrevues avec les médias puisque je pouvais parler de Cornwall d'une façon positive et instructive.

I am deeply proud of my heritage, proud of being the daughter of a Franco-Manitoban maman and of a Trinidadian Pop. I am so fortunate to have them here along with my dear sister.

And I am most honoured to be the first woman Mayor of Cornwall. I have had a few little girls tell me that they would run for Mayor one day. That is a beautiful thing.

Tonight, I want to speak to you of a magnificent story, a wondrously true one, but which is as yet unfinished.

Together over the next four years, we will write some of its pages, for this is OUR story.

It is one rooted in time immemorial with the first presence of our brothers and sisters of the Mohawk people. As we cherish our renewed linkages and friendships in the 21st Century, we reconnect with the rich majesty and blessings of this land.

Few areas of Canada hold in their hands such an extraordinary opportunity to truly engage in a respectful and meaningful partnership and as Mayor, I look forward to pursuing measures with Council that will fully embrace this unique moment.

Working closely with the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, we will make the imaginative development of our jointly acquired Waterfront Port Lands.

Yes. It's time. It's time to move forward purposefully to seize the hour, in celebration of our history and most particularly, of our future.

Historians can tell us of the key role played by Cornwall and area in the development of Ontario, with the coming of the Loyalist presence some 234 years ago. This area has been a leader in so many fields of endeavour and progress and it is time to renew this spirit and become a leader once again.

The story continues with francophones coming to join in the continued progress of this community.

J'ai un message pour notre francophonie ici à Cornwall. Il y a une grande énergie chez nos francophones, une bonne capacité d'innover, un souci pour la relève. Une communauté francophone qui vibre, amène non seulement du positif communautaire, mais aussi des retombées économiques positives. Vous êtes mobilisés ces temps-ci, de façon paisible, avec ténacité et dignité, avec un message de respect. Je suis fière de vous, de nous.

For what Franco-Ontarians seek is simple but crucial- they seek respect.

And respect for one another must be at the heart of our actions over the next four years. Constructive discussion and at times disagreement can help us to achieve the best results.

Over the past few weeks, I have been preparing to assume office and in this regard, I want to thank Mayor O'Shaugnessy for his graciousness. I have met individually with all incoming members of Council. Let me assure the citizens of Cornwall that you have elected a good Council.

These individuals all have great love in their hearts – for their families and for this community. I know that they want to do the very best and I can on their behalf tell you that we expect you to hold us to a high standard. Expect much of us, as you join us in this enterprise.

I also want to say to Cornwall, that we are fortunate to have a City administration that is of the highest quality and that is bright, hard-working and committed to the success of this City.

And I also wish to proclaim to the people of Cornwall, that we have city employees who have that same commitment to their work in the service of their fellow citizens. From the time that you turn on a tap in the morning, to your drive to work on city streets, to your trip to the park or to the Benson Centre or to the Aquatic Centre, you are connected to their crucial work.

We face many challenges. That is nothing new. But we have been dealt a far better hand than some may think, and we must not fear to use it wisely, because it is indeed time to move forward in so many areas, be it the future of our Waterfront and the Port Lands, economic and social progress, the appropriate formula for our Centre for the Arts, electoral renewal, and many others.

We need to acknowledge those challenges and work in partnership towards solutions. The Social Development Council has been coordinating a Vibrant Community Roundtable and through extensive surveys, it has identified three top areas of concern which involve mental health issues, access to healthcare and poverty.

The City of Cornwall does not have the jurisdiction, nor the resources to alone solve those problems, but we can participate in those discussions, and always be aware that many of our municipal services support people's participation in our community, which is a key to community health.

Affordability is also a big challenge for our City. Our municipal services are the backbone of a good quality of life and are important in our goal of attracting more investment and more people. However, our assessment is limited and so we must pay particular attention to our budget, to a long-term financial plan that keeps us in a balanced situation that continues to provide those valuable services while keeping up with the cost of maintaining our infrastructure.

Nous avons du pain sur la planche! Nos bons services municipaux sont absolument essentiels pour une bonne qualité de vie mais nous avons des défis quant à nos évaluations foncières et notre capacité de taxation.

There is much more that I would want to express this evening, but this is not a bedtime story, and I don't want to put you to sleep. It is rather a call to action together, for the people of Cornwall will have a great role to play in our success over the next four years. No Mayor and no Council can do this alone. We need your engagement and your ideas.

And so let's roll up our sleeves and get started. L'histoire nous attend. Our history is waiting.